

IRC

Annual report 2023



Supporting water sanitation
and hygiene services for life

IRC Annual Report 2023

This Annual Report highlights some of our achievements in 2023, connecting people and ideas, systems and solutions to achieve justice for all. For more detailed information about our progress and finances, please read our [2023 Monitoring Report](#) and our [Financial Report 2023](#).

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The following definitions apply to all infographics and narratives shared in this report:

Measuring progress is complicated.

Throughout this report we use definitions from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) to assess the quality of services that people are receiving and to set targets for the future. We share progress towards the 2030 vision for WASH services at national and district levels but for detailed reflection on these please see our [2023 Monitoring Report](#).

The JMP outlines a 'service ladder' of five service levels for water and sanitation: no service (surface water or open defecation); unimproved; limited; basic; and, safely managed. Each level up from the bottom represents a significant improvement in the safety and security of the supply. A similar ladder exists for hygiene, and WASH in health care facilities and schools.

Like the JMP, we use a combination of household survey data, infrastructure, water quality, and administrative data to estimate the proportion of the population being served at each level. We also consider other criteria including technology type, protection from contaminants, distance from home and availability. Reported changes in service levels since the 2017 baseline are based on geographies in which at least two data points are available between 2017-2023. The JMP definitions do not always match perfectly to national norms and standards. In particular, there is disagreement about what constitutes 'safe' services. Despite this, we believe it makes sense to use JMP wherever possible. For more information on the JMP methodology, go to washdata.org/monitoring/methods.

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The story of our cover photo:

Bosco Mwije is a plumber working for the government of Uganda's Mid-Western Umbrella for Water and Sanitation Authority in Rweihamba, Kasenda. The government is committed to an ambitious goal: achieving universal access to piped water supply through public utilities by 2040. IRC is supporting regional departments such as the Mid-Western Umbrella in systems strengthening for improved service delivery. This includes advice on governance, documentation and impact storytelling, learning expositions and policy advocacy.

"Whenever I have any problem with the tap or water is not flowing, I just call Bosco. He responds immediately and he never complains," says Grace Kansiime, a small business owner whose household recently started receiving safe piped water. The ever-smiling Bosco is the point of contact for the community and makes frequent visits to manage repairs, do meter readings and install new connections. In his free time, Bosco likes to watch football.





Message from the CEO and Chair

Creating a just and sustainable world requires radical, collective action. Our work spans rural districts, national capitals, and global stages. It allows us to understand what it takes to ensure access to clean and safe water and sanitation for all, and it informs our engagement in broader networks dedicated to climate and social justice.

A highlight for IRC and our One For All alliance partners this year was the All Systems Connect International Symposium in May. This three-day event drew more than 700 participants to The Hague. They included delegations led by ten national ministries from One For All countries – a dynamic mix of ministers, mayors, academics, service providers, and grassroots NGOs. These delegations met, talked and worked with other financiers, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) colleagues from other countries and representatives from health, climate, and other sectors. Learning and sharing, they renewed their commitment to the systems change that's critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our work is guided by our Destination 2030 theory of change that outlines integrated action across districts, nations, and the world. In 2023, years of investment in partner districts began to pay off as we saw steady progress at the district level being outpaced by growing interest and uptake at the national level. In Ghana and Uganda our master planning approach is being integrated into national strategies. In Ghana we've also have seen an exciting expansion from our initial partner district, Asutifi North, to three additional districts in the Ahafo region. We'll build on this momentum in the years ahead to drive regional and national level uptake across the world.

Systems change for sustainable services is never easy. Yet even amidst severe security challenges in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, local leaders are taking bold steps in planning and developing their water and sanitation services.

On the global stage, a high-level meeting during the UN Water Conference, attended by the King of the Netherlands and the President of Botswana, set in motion our Heads of State Initiatives. These are a collaborative effort to mobilise the highest levels of political support for WASH initiatives within countries.

Our ambitious vision is that all the countries where we work will recognise WASH as a national priority, key to ensuring resilience and wellbeing in a changing world.

IRC is evolving in the face of global changes. In 2023, our Supervisory Board endorsed a transformative plan. IRC will become a federation of autonomous national organisations, united by a common vision and brand: OneIRC.

We achieved a new record for annual revenue of €12.5 million. Despite this, and reflecting the challenging global environment, our overall financial outcome was a loss of €463k. A strategic restructuring towards the year's end will streamline costs and prepare us for a future as a decentralised network with a focus on the Global South.

As we reflect on the past year, we're grateful for the resilience and dedication of our staff and partners worldwide. Despite financial and operational challenges, we've not only persevered – we've thrived. We remain committed to a world where everyone takes safe water and sanitation services for granted. We thank you for your continued partnership in building a more just and sustainable world for all.



Patrick Moriarty
Chief Executive Officer, IRC



Wambui Gichuri
Chair, Supervisory Board, IRC

One For All alliance – achieving greater, and faster, impact together

2023 was the second year that IRC, Water For People and Water for Good, worked together as Alliance members, to implement our Destination 2030 joint strategy and mission. We are aiming to close the gap for over 2 billion people globally, 200 million people nationally, and 20 million people locally. People whose health, lives and futures are at risk from lack of sustainable services, resulting in dirty water and poor sanitation and hygiene. One For All was founded in the belief that we can go faster and further together.



Figure: One For All's three interconnected impact pathways

The One For All joint influence strategy and results framework are propelling our collective work on achieving sustainable WASH services for all. Together we now reach 17 countries around the globe. And while our local level work is crucial for learning and proof of concept, it is at country level that we are seeing impact at scale to achieve SDG 6.

The Sustainable Development Goals intersect and overlap in their pursuit of justice, peace and prosperity for all: action towards one goal affects outcomes in other goals.

It's the same with One For All. We work with local and national governments and regional and global institutions to implement lasting climate-resilient water and sanitation systems.

We reach beyond our sector to build alliances with leaders in health, climate, environment, economic development, education and equality. Simply put, we partner with others because our futures and systems are interconnected. You'll see examples of this in the stories we're sharing this year.

We believe that safe and sustainable water and sanitation services serve as a gateway to more effective public services, sustainable economic development and broader social justice. The actions of one – a person, a community, an alliance – are in support of all. Explore more: www.oneforallalliance.org



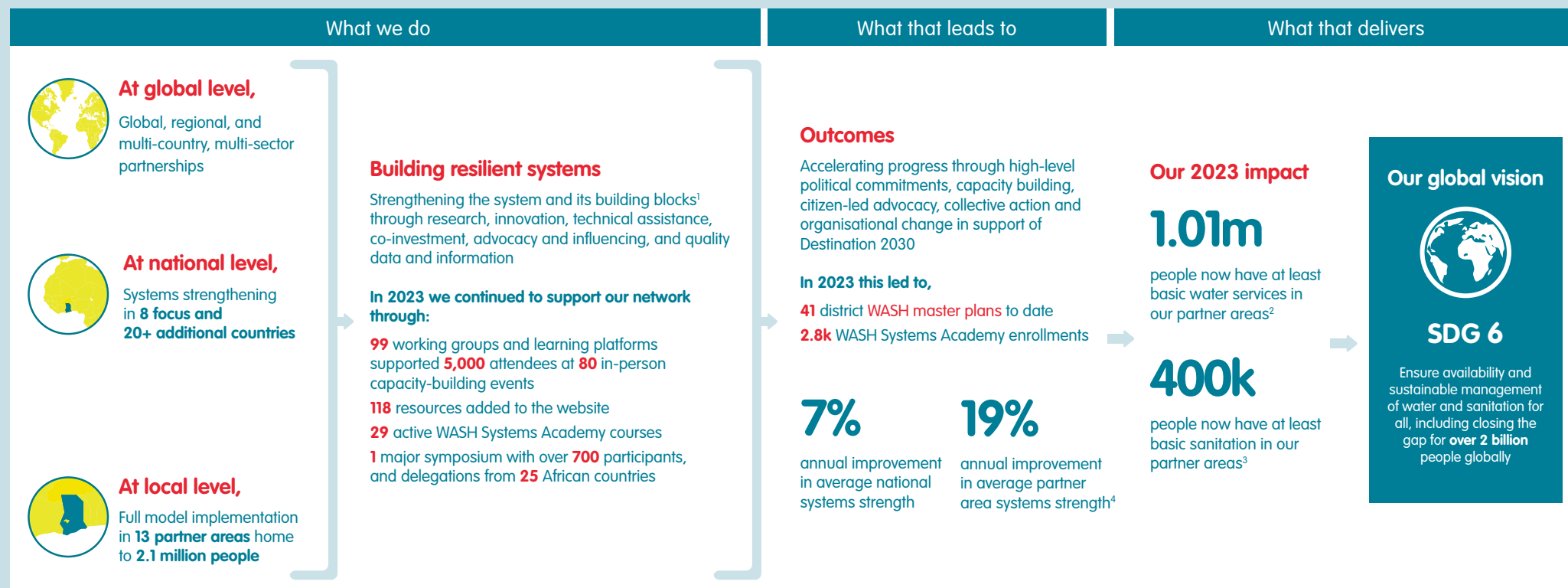
How we work

IRC looks at the WASH system as a whole, as well as through the lens of nine critical building blocks: institutions, policy and legislation, planning, finance, regulation and accountability, monitoring, infrastructure, water resources management and learning and adaptation.

We can only deliver truly sustainable WASH services when all these building blocks are in place and working effectively together at all institutional levels. We help put these building blocks in place by supporting political and technical leaders to improve governance at many levels, and by providing consultancy, models and tools to everyone involved. We also use partnerships, visionary planning, and technical assistance to

raise financing and drive a collective action movement for WASH systems strengthening. We've proved that collective action by multi-skilled, multi-level partnerships is the only way to achieve sustainable WASH services. We're demonstrating how, when allied with strong and committed government leadership, these partnerships can achieve greater impact and real systems change.¹

IRC AT A GLANCE



1. Understanding the WASH System and Its Building Blocks, 2018, Huston A. and Moriarty P.

2. Based on data from our partner areas in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, India and Uganda of a total population of 2.0m

3. See 2 above.

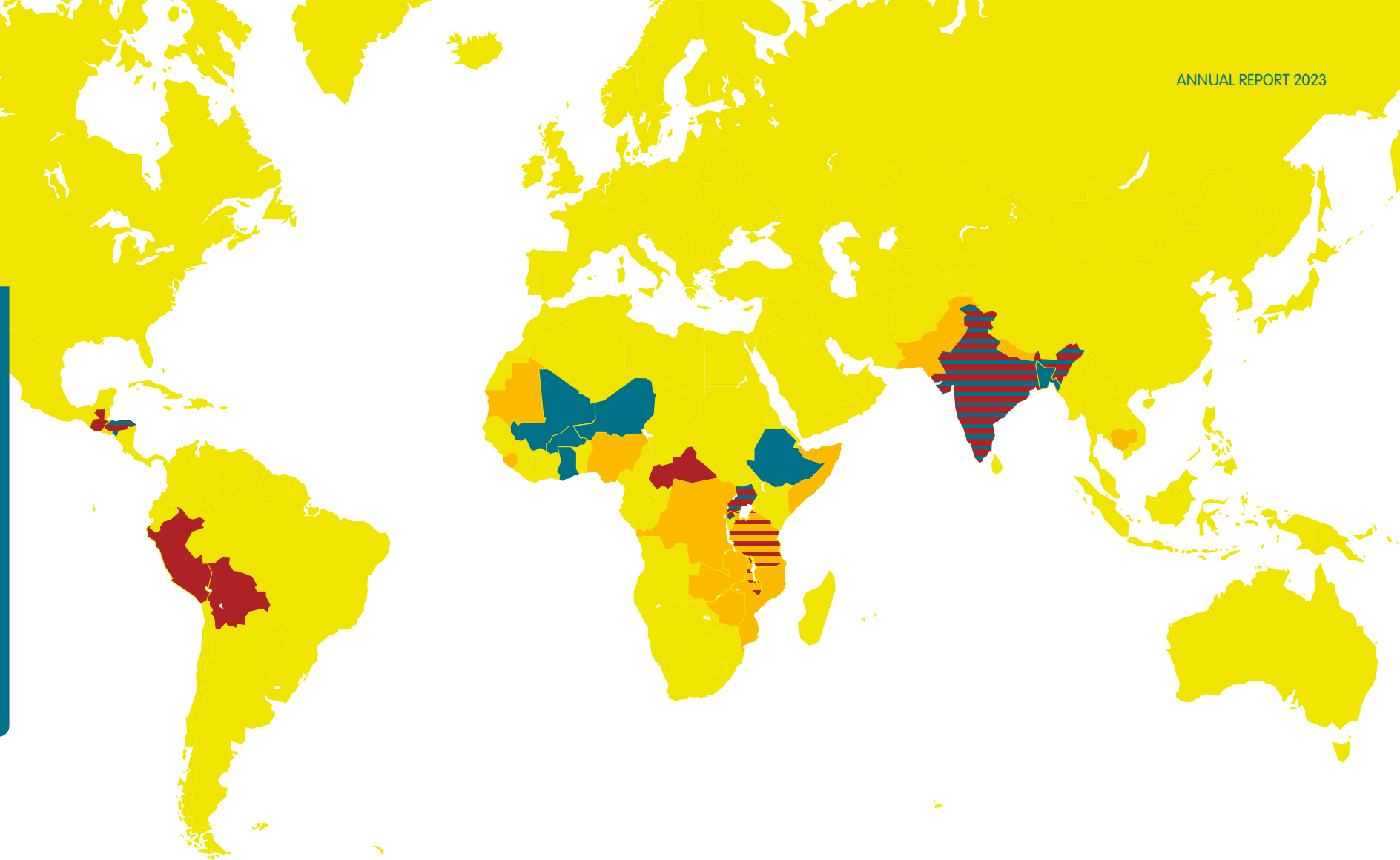
4. At IRC, we capture systems strengthening by measuring progress on building blocks rated 1 (worst) to 5 (best). Since 2018, average national system strength has gone up from 2.7 to 3.0 and partner area system strength from 2.3 to 3.3

The context of our work in 2023

124 people
in our flexible workforce.
More on pg 36.

110
Active programmes/
projects in 24
countries

€12.5
million spent from
37 donors and
47 clients



Index

- The largest part of our work happens in the following countries: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras*, India, Mali, Niger, Rwanda and Uganda. Although we work in Bangladesh and India, we do not yet have IRC offices there.
- Through the One For All Alliance we contribute to impact in Bolivia, Central African Republic, Guatemala, Malawi, Peru and Tanzania, as well as other countries where the Alliance has joint presence - see map.
- Through projects, consultancy assignments and partnerships, we also worked in Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe amongst others.

* By mid-2023 IRC concluded its activities in Honduras, shifting focus from direct involvement to supporting broader initiatives through our One For All alliance partner, Water For People. One For All will continue to work towards the Destination 2030 outcome targets for the country. 2023 marked a successful year for IRC in Honduras. The Vice Minister for Finance attended our All Systems Connect International Symposium and the government finalised its national finance strategy, ensuring sustained impact in WASH.



Connecting people and ideas, systems and solutions to achieve justice for all

In May 2023, 700 changemakers gathered for our All Systems Connect International Symposium in The Hague, the Netherlands. The event was a partnership between One For All alliance members IRC, Water For People and Water for Good and other organisations. Our ambition was to drive systems change by dissolving the boundaries between systems: in health, climate, social justice, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

The event attracted 10 ministerial level delegations from Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda and Uganda, and government representatives from 57 other countries. There were more than 250 presenters, including young activists, social justice champions, health and climate experts⁶.

“I found out that water is not just a WASH issue or a health issue or a poverty issue, it is also a social justice issue, it is also a gender issue, it is also a climate issue.” Shomy Hasan Chowdry, WASH activist from Bangladesh, speaking at the Symposium.⁷

“Why connect systems? Because the multidimensional challenges we face can’t be solved by the fragmented and siloed thinking of the past. The carbon from my flight affects the onset of your rainy season. The runoff from your fertilizer and pesticide use pollutes the water needed for my drinking water service. All these systems are connected, across boundaries of community and nation. We need to accelerate our progress and to join the dots. The question is, how?”

Patrick Moriarty, All Systems Connect – How can systems leadership achieve justice for all? ircwash.org⁵ - the Symposium pre-reader that aimed to trigger thinking around systems leadership.

We’re starting to see the impact of this and our previous systems symposia in the global conversation about water and sanitation. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN’s Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) have initiated a process to agree core indicators for measuring WASH systems strengthening at country level. IRC is part of this process, laying the groundwork for what will be the most comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach for tracking WASH systems change to date.

5. Read the background paper to the Symposium that aimed to trigger thinking around the topic of systems leadership: bit.ly/ASCbackgroundpaper

6. Read insights and calls for action from 700 changemakers in the post-event document, the All Systems Connect communiqué: www.allsystemsconnect2023.org/communique. All resources are available at www.allsystemsconnect2023.org

7. Watch Shomy Hasan Chowdry speaking at the Symposium: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSCWzSZ0kqY



H.E. Ms. Abida Sidik Mia, Minister of Water and Sanitation for Malawi at the All Systems Connect International Symposium

A game-changing approach to influencing political agendas: Heads of State Initiatives

A major highlight of 2023 was that eleven countries⁸ - eight African - have committed to developing presidential compacts to prioritise water and sanitation. Presidential compacts are clear commitments to WASH that contain comprehensive plans for implementation and change, including increased budget allocations and innovative financing.

These are the result of a major multi-stakeholder global movement, the Heads of State Initiatives. A head of state's backing for systems change is a gamechanger in achieving SDG 6 in a country. Yet many presidents, monarchs or heads of government simply haven't seen water, sanitation and hygiene as their priority. So in 2022, the Government of the Netherlands, IRC, Sanitation and Water for All and UNICEF agreed to work together with several UN Member States to stimulate political leadership for water, sanitation, and hygiene at the highest levels.

The initiative really took off after an inspiring event at the UN 2023 Water Conference in March 2023, attended by the King of the Netherlands, the President of Botswana and ministers from a wide range of countries. Supporting the Heads of State Initiatives is one of our key commitments to the **Water Action Agenda**. Make Change Sprint

sessions at the All Systems Connect International Symposium then took the momentum further. They brought together a group of systems leaders including ministers to develop a plan for accelerating the uptake of Presidential Compacts across the globe. Another impactful moment during the Symposium was when ministers and heads of delegations joined a breakfast meeting convened by The Kingdom of the Netherlands. Ministers from Zimbabwe and Ghana shared case studies and showed how Presidential Compacts can attract greater investment and support for WASH and make SDG 6 possible.

All this led to the formal launch of the initiative at World Water Week in August 2023. We are confident that the first Compacts will be signed in 2024 and that the movement will grow, attracting more heads of state, countries and development partners.

8. Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia, Malawi, South-Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe

Driving change in Africa

Our Africa Regional Programme is boosting leadership in policies, finances, and innovations in governance. It is strengthening partnerships with important regional organisations, building on the momentum initiated by the [All Systems Go Africa symposium⁹](#) in 2022.

Dr Azzika Tanko Yussif, Acting Director of Programmes of the African Ministers' Council on Water, at the All Systems Go Africa Symposium 2022



We worked with the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) to reflect on the design of the post-2025 Africa Water Vision. We built our relationship with the African Water and Sanitation Association (AfWASA), encouraging participation at global and regional advocacy events (All Systems Connect 2023, and AfricaSan7, a flagship sanitation and hygiene event). We're also supporting AfWASA to engage with district WASH operators and authorities through a pilot programme in five of our focus countries.

We brought together partners, shared our knowledge and stories and helped advocate for systems strengthening in events such as those already mentioned, as well as the UN 2023 Water Conference. We've also helped advance innovative solutions for financing water, sanitation and hygiene by working with the African Development Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development (OECD) and the West African Development Bank ([link](#)).

We extended our reach beyond our focus countries in this final year of the three-year Partnership for WASH Systems in Africa. This saw us working closely with UNICEF and Water For People to strengthen systems in eight new countries. Hundreds of water, sanitation and hygiene professionals benefitted from new training courses in finance and systems strengthening, which we launched in English and French this year. The courses are now available on both the WASH Systems Academy and the UNICEF Agora platform, which means they also reach all UNICEF WASH advisors. A number of countries have received on-demand technical assistance this year. We've completed sector-wide sustainability checks in Mauritania and these are in progress in Niger. In Mozambique, we've also helped with climate-resilient WASH services, national monitoring systems, and the development of national WASH finance strategies.

9. www.ircwash.org/all-systems-go-africa

Connecting and expanding in Asia

We've grown our systems strengthening work in Asia this year, from Bangladesh and India, to Cambodia, Nepal and Pakistan. We are continuing to establish IRC as a valuable partner in the region.

The WASH Systems Academy has been at the heart of this expansion. Globally, the WASH Systems Academy reached 8,000+ users (an additional 2,800 in 2023) from 125 countries, with a completion rate of 31% this year. 95% of users said they would 'highly recommend' our courses, and 85% report they were able to apply their learning within six months. Of these numbers, 650+ people were from 27 Asian countries.

We developed a context-specific course - WASH Systems Strengthening: the basics - for the Asian Development Bank, which is used by government officials from seven countries in the region. Working through Agenda for Change, we helped customise the course for the Nepali context.

We've also tailored the course specifically for India and Pakistan through a collaboration with Welt-

hungerhilfe. This was part of a project that uses systems thinking to ensure sustained WASH services, and influences policy at regional and national levels in India, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, as well as internationally.

"The course was very effective in increasing understanding of the complex WASH system in a systematic manner. It helped us to design activities with confidence using a systems approach."

Sanjib Dey, Senior Project Coordinator,
Welthungerhilfe (India).



Participants at the WASH systems strengthening for Nepal workshop

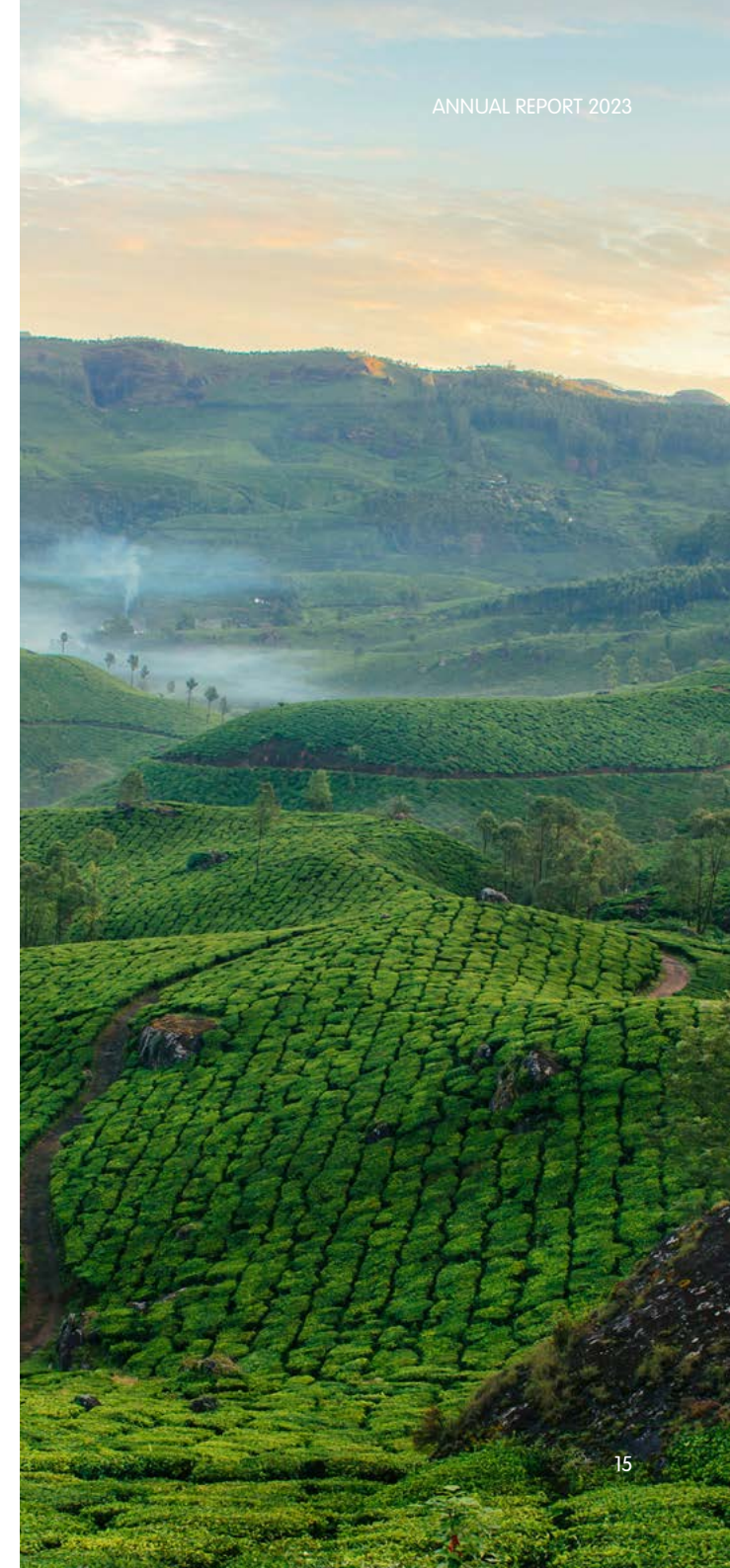
Our Asia team took part in WASH system strengthening assessments in Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, with support from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). This helped introduce IRC to officials, organisations, and individuals in these countries. We've also worked with the Swiss Consortium for Water and Sanitation (Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Cambodia) and Agenda for Change (Nepal) to help figure out what systems strengthening approaches mean for their work.

In Bangladesh, as a part of the WASH SDG Consortium, we have advocated for strengthening WASH

service monitoring at the sub-national level. We conducted a baseline study for our partnership with BRAC which began in 2022. We also started work on innovative approaches and strengthening local government's capacity for sustainable WASH service delivery. The partnership is planning to reach 1 million people with safely managed water and sanitation services in climate vulnerable areas of Bangladesh. We carried out a sustainability check of the WASH SDG sub-programmes in Bangladesh, Nepal and Indonesia (together with four countries in Africa). We also carried out an assessment of the presence of sanitation regulation in cities in Bangladesh for the Water Integrity Network (WIN).

In Cambodia, we've completed assignments for 100fontaines and are currently working with UNICEF on a finance strategy for sanitation.

We'll continue supporting India, Nepal and Bangladesh more intensely and build on this work to develop resources and knowledge in other countries in the region.



Achieving social justice for all

When Mary James Gill, Executive Director of the Center for Law & Justice in Pakistan, spoke during a session at the All Systems Connect Symposium, people in the room were visibly moved. She was speaking about the rights-claiming actions of informal and precarious workers, and confronted participants with the realities of sewage cleaners losing their lives on the job. She called for awareness and action to ensure their dignity and better regulation to protect these workers. Other sessions also triggered expert conversations on achieving social justice for all, which resulted in the following calls to action from Symposium participants:

- increase our awareness of how gender, race, class and power influence the way we act within systems
- challenge discrimination by exposing it, and prioritising the most vulnerable
- include rights organisations in multi-stakeholder dialogues and include marginalised people in systems strengthening processes
- ensure that access to safe water and sanitation is not subject to a person's legality, formality or documentation
- ensure we serve people's material needs (for water, housing, sanitation, a safe environment, health), in a way that respects them and their participation



Mary James Gilles during a plenary session at the All Systems Connect International Symposium 2023.

In 2022-23 we conducted organisation-wide mapping to provide insights into how social inclusion is addressed in current WASH programmes, knowledge products and evidence at IRC. This area of work has benefited from the strong social justice and citizens voice themes and calls to action formulated at the Symposium. These insights are being used to strengthen our social inclusion programming.



Snapshots from our focus countries

This photo shows Alice Mukandayambaje in Rutare Village, Rwamagana District in Rwanda, one of the areas where IRC is working in partnership to strengthen water and sanitation governance. Through its role in the USAID-funded Isoko y'Ubuzima initiative, IRC has supported the Ministry of Infrastructure to orient its multi-year action plan toward systems strengthening and improving gender equity. Institutions across 10 districts already show measurable increases in capacity and non-revenue water is on the decline.

Alice is one of the Isoko y'Ubuzima project community mobilisers volunteers. In her community, she has built an improved latrine and most importantly, installed a homemade handwashing facility. She is inspiring other members of the community to adopt desired sanitation and hygiene behaviours.

The next few pages are dedicated to stories from all our focus countries. They show how we're achieving systemic change at scale, driven by systems leaders working at local and national levels who are influencing at the highest levels. For more detailed information about our country, regional and global programmes and their latest challenges and achievements, please refer to our [2023 Monitoring Report](#).

Bangladesh: Addressing climate challenges with integrated water resource management

Climate change results in significantly less water in the Barind region of Bangladesh. Yet in other areas, waterlogging slows progress in sanitation and hygiene. Excess salinity is taking a toll in the coastal regions affecting at least 10% of handpumps. And flash floods and cyclones destroy improved toilets in many regions every year.

We work with a group of key partners including Simavi, WaterAid, and BRAC. We built on these partnerships this year, to initiate a collaboration between the historically siloed sectors of WASH and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), driven by the support and involvement of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Our contribution was sparked by our work with the WASH SDG Consortium and now continues as part of a broader effort known as the Equitable and Sustainable WASH Services in Bangladesh Delta Plan Hotspots 2022–2026, a project led by BRAC.

A pivotal moment came when NGOs, civil society organisations, and government ministries came together for a workshop that we facilitated at the 9th **International Conference on Water and Flood Management (ICWFM 2023)**¹⁰. The session, **Building WASH into IWRM**, marked the beginning of a concerted effort to link WASH and IWRM.¹¹

10. ICWFM 2023: <https://icwfm2023.info/> <https://www.ircwash.org/blog/wash-crucial-component-iwrn>

11. Slides: https://www.ircwash.org/sites/default/files/session_plan_and_speakers_slide.pdf

Bangladesh at a glance

Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023

2



Staff

* Applies to all service level data.



During the workshop, Dr. Sharmind Neelormi, Professor of Economics in Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, emphasised how gender is a neglected issue, especially in disaster-prone areas. She explained how in the post-disaster period, attention to proper sanitation facilities and menstrual hygiene products is often neglected: *“This is not due to corruption, it’s just poor planning because the needs of women and children are not seriously considered. In the high saline coastal areas, maintaining menstrual hygiene without clean water and proper toilets is impossible.”*

One of the successes of the event was when Motaleb Hossain Sarker, Director of the Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS) pledged to incorporate WASH NGOs into their planning processes for the My Village–My Town project. The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is set to build on this momentum in 2024.



Groupwork during the ‘Building WASH into IWRM’ workshop at the 9th International Conference on Water and Flood Management.

Hotspot	Barind	Coastal	Flood Plain	Haor
Number of sub-districts	7	25	3	10
Population	1,600,000	5,700,000	980,000	2,200,000
Climatic challenges	Fresh water scarcity Flooding Waterlogging Declining groundwater levels	Cyclonic storms Flooding Tidal surges Intense rain Waterlogging/drainage congestion Riverbank and coastal erosion	Flooding Waterlogging Sedimentation and navigation	Fresh water scarcity Flash and monsoon flooding Waterlogging Drainage congestion

Burkina Faso: leaving no one behind in fragile environments

2023 was all about integrating emergency and development approaches. This helps to strengthen district and national governance of WASH, and address both routine and emergency needs. Our work in system strengthening expanded to establishing new household water connections to reach vulnerable and marginalised people.

For example, when terrorist attacks happen, water infrastructure gets destroyed and people move to safer areas – putting a burden on their water sources. The means to address this is available: there is data to inform better planning and multiple actors are involved. But the Ministry of Water is struggling to coordinate these. Teaming up with UNICEF, we crafted a guidance framework to help the Ministry to embed a nexus approach into planning, coordination, and reporting.

We provided ongoing support to help Banfora and Tenkodogo communes to implement their WASH master plans and monitor their progress. In Tenkodogo, this resulted in climate-resilient water access for **3,000 low-income people**¹². Following a study to map marginalised communities and their current water services, we supported ten villages in Tenkodogo who will receive better water services. People living in SigriYaoghin, one of the selected villages, are now getting their water from piped water networks.

12. See: www.ircwash.org/news/more-and-better-water-sigriyaoghin-burkina-faso

13. Scaling areas demonstrate the scope and reach of our systems strengthening work beyond partner areas. It is about driving impact in those areas, understanding and engaging effectively with complex systems, and identifying and scaling solutions to the national level.

Burkina Faso at a glance

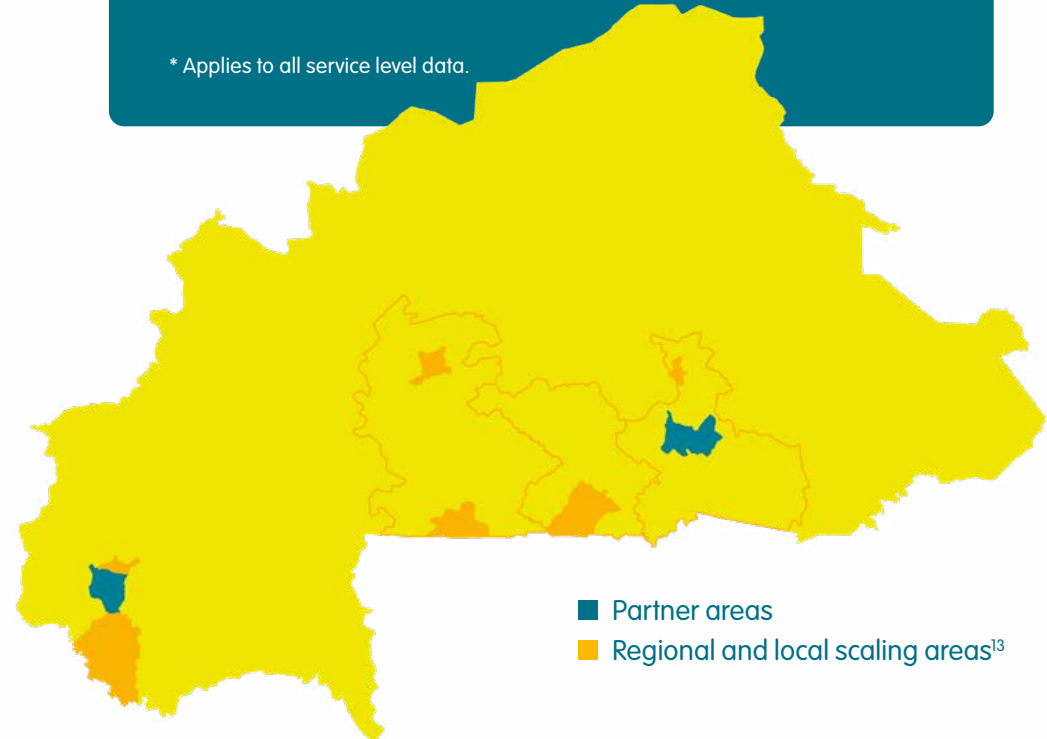
Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023



* Applies to all service level data.



Partner area: Banfora

Population	178,550
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	67%
Sanitation	19%
Hygiene	34%

Partner area: Tenkodogo

Population	176,386
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	49%
Sanitation	43%

Scaling areas

Scaling area	Léo
Population	75,602
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Koudougou
Population	180,720
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Pouytenga
Population	140,151
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Po
Population	79,631
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Bérégadougou
Population	13,332
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Niangoloko
Population	104,601
Status masterplan	Completed



Maria Galbane, a resident of the village of Sigri-Yaoghin in Tenkodogo commune.

“Before, we drew water from the well. After, we got hand pumps. But pumping water was hard work and often water contained impurities. Today, we have taps with clean water, which will help to eradicate water-related diseases. We women use a lot of water for our daily chores and having clean water is essential.”

Maria Galbane, resident of the village of Sigri-Yaoghin

Ethiopia: a transformative journey to mobilise finances

Ethiopia witnessed a groundbreaking achievement this year, with the formulation of its first draft national WASH finance strategy.

Back in 2022, the One WASH National Program figures highlighted a 43% financing gap between what existed, and what was needed. This mobilised people to want to collaborate to give more attention to WASH financing – including those working in the Ministry of Finance.

The National WASH Financing Working Group, which we co-chair, made collective action possible. We helped engage key national level stakeholders and brought in national and international finance experts to inform critical discussions and develop the goals and contents of a WASH finance strategy.

A series of strategic interventions at subnational levels helped. We'd been developing costed WASH master plans for nine woredas (districts) since 2018. And in 2023, we also helped develop resource mobilisation strategies for three of these, in the Amhara region.

Previous annual WASH budget-tracking analyses had revealed that the three woredas in the region – Farta, Dera and North Mecha – had only secured 16% of the budgets required by their master plans. We helped to address this by hiring a resource mobilisation officer based in Bahir Dar – the capital city.

This has been a transformative journey, characterised by collaborative efforts, evidence-based advocacy, and the unwavering commitment of individuals and organisations to secure a healthier, more sustainable future for all Ethiopians.

Ethiopia at a glance

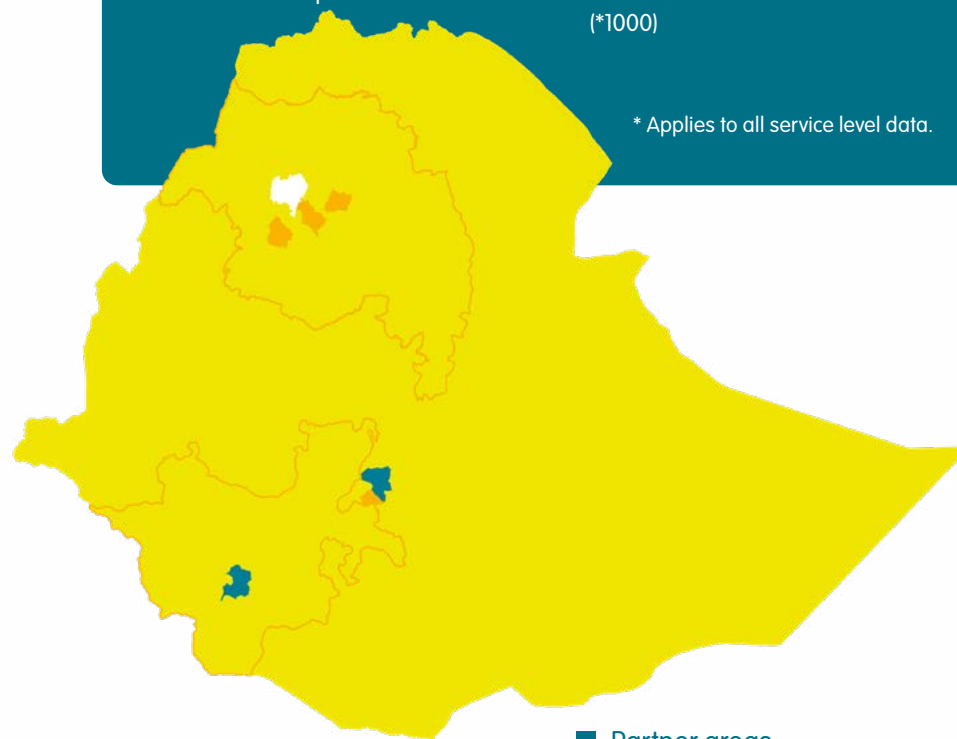
Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023



* Applies to all service level data.



■ Partner areas
■ Regional and local scaling areas

Partner area: Negelle Arsi

Population	347,974
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	33%
Sanitation	23%
Hygiene	9%
# Schools	38
# Health posts	23

Partner area: South Ari

Population	198,595
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	43%
Sanitation	7%
Hygiene	1%
# Schools	28
# Health posts	10

Scaling areas

Scaling area	Dera
Population	80,669
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Mille
Population	124,114
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	North Mecha
Population	366,142
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Farta
Population	94,169
Status masterplan	Completed

“In Dera, less than 2% of the woreda budget was being allocated for WASH. After the review workshop and awareness raising about the resource mobilisation strategy, the woreda allocated 23% - 2 million Birr from the total budget of 8.7 million.”

Zeyinu Essa, Head of the Woreda Water & Energy Office, Dera woreda



IRC Ethiopia Country Director, Lemessa Mekonta facilitating a National WASH Financing Working Group Meeting.

Ghana: master planning on its way to regional, national and global scale

Since its launch in 2017, the Asutifi North Ahonidie Mpontuo (ANAM) initiative has helped achieve a 90% access rate to basic or safely managed water services, up from 82% in 2017, despite a 17% population increase. Thanks to the leadership of District Chief Executive, Hon. Anthony Mensah, this has spurred replication efforts across the Ahafo region, which will benefit 550,000 people in six districts. Three districts have finalised their WASH master plans, gearing up for action through strategic partnerships.

“We have used the planning from the water sector to showcase how planning can be done and how problems can be solved. And how the energy of communities can be sustained [and] to go beyond water to enter into other areas of development.” Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa, Director General of the National Development Planning Commission.

A big highlight was contributing to a revised water policy for the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources. We are also collaborating with the NDPC to improve WASH planning in the next framework due in 2025, for the period 2026-29.

This collaboration transcended to global level where we co-hosted events at the UN SDGs Summit, the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and of course our All Systems Connect International Symposium in the Netherlands.

At the UN SDG Summit “Ghana was asked to select five out of the seventeen goals and even five targets out of the 169. ... We used AI to do all the gymnastics and the arithmetic. Goal 6 was the most connected in terms of output and input for our whole development regime and particularly 6.1. and 6.2.” Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa.

Moving from pilot to scale and institutionalisation remains challenging. However, The Asutifi North District Assembly continues to inspire other districts and contribute to advocacy and influence globally.

Ghana at a glance

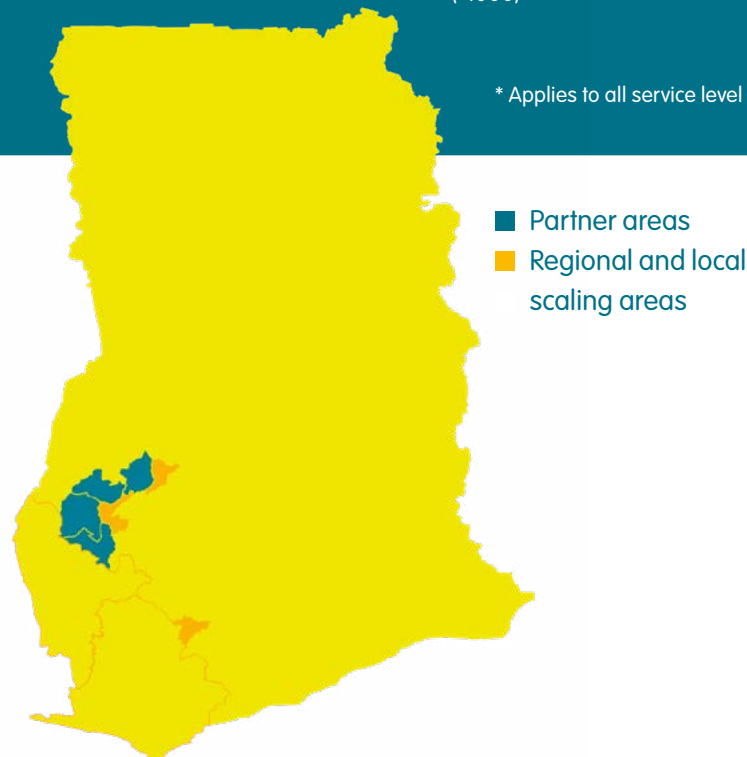
Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023



* Applies to all service level data.



“This year Asutifi North received a special award for WASH (at the District League Table) and this was given to them by the King of Ashanti. ... Tears came into my eyes because I could turn my eyes back to 2017 and see what was happening there. And in 2023-2024 this has been acknowledged.”*

Dr. Kodjo Esseim Mensah-Abrampa, Director General of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in Ghana.

Partner area: Asutifi North

Population	72,000
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	78%
Sanitation	26%
# Schools	90
# Health posts	7

Partner area: Asunafo North

Population	154,433
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	58%
Sanitation	15%
# Schools	70
# Health posts	25

Scaling areas

Scaling area	Asutifi South
Population	115,053
Status masterplan	To be developed

Scaling area	Tano South
Population	96,885
Status masterplan	To be developed

Scaling area	Upper Denkyira East
Population	117,530
Status masterplan	To be determined

Partner area: Asunafo South

Population	94,278
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	70%
Sanitation	15%
# Schools	31
# Health posts	26

Partner area: Tano North

Population	96,247
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	71%
Sanitation	14%
# Schools	31
# Health posts	18

* The District League Table Report (DLT) evaluates service delivery in Ghana's 261 districts, focusing on health, nutrition, education, water, sanitation, governance, and energy. Published by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and UNICEF, the DLT integrates SDGs and African Union Agenda 2063 indicators to provide district-level data for achieving global commitments and advocating for equitable resource distribution.



Hon. Anthony Mensah, District Chief Executive of Asutifi North and Kenyasi.

India: applying systems strengthening approaches to wider social justice

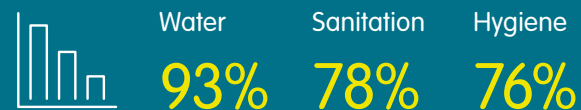
With our Alliance partner Water For People, we've collaborated with UNICEF, WaterAid, Aga Khan Foundation, and Tata Trust on a WASH sector assessment at the national and state level in Odisha. This helped highlight existing strengths and areas for improvement. We looked critically at water resources management, resource security, operations and maintenance, and finance mechanisms to ensure services are continued and investments aren't wasted.

We're reaching beyond WASH too, expanding our consultancy work to include system strengthening in other areas of social justice such as climate and health. A notable assignment is our collaboration with the Indian partners of the Work: No Child's Business initiative. We support a consortium of nine partners across three states and nationally, to address child labour and its interconnections with education, livelihood, and access to public services.

We were invited to assist the consortium by documenting outcomes, facilitating learning and reflection, and planning for the programme's final phase. We drew on our experience from the Watershed programme, which emphasised citizen engagement to claim water rights, as well as expertise in child rights and outcome harvesting in India. We bring a systems perspective and a neutral approach that helps with understanding complex interconnections and improving planning in contexts beyond WASH.

India at a glance

Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023

1



Staff

* Applies to all service level data.



“Partners of the Work: No Child’s Business programme in India are very happy with the support of IRC. We’ve built our capacity and have been able to understand the added value of harvesting outcomes related to the work that we do to eradicate child labour in different regions of India. Several of the project partners will continue to use outcome harvesting as a monitoring and planning tool after the project ends.”

Sandra Claassen, Director, Arisa, a project partner.

Partner area:	Ganjam-Chhatrapur
Population	105,723
# Schools	158
# Health posts	Unknown



Ruchika Shiva from IRC India facilitating a workshop for Arisa and partners.

Mali: connecting with health systems through regional and national planning

Since 2019, we have been on a mission to strengthen WASH systems in Mali by improving services in schools and health care facilities.

In Nossombougou, at least basic water coverage in healthcare facilities increased from 60% to 83% in 2020. In Ouolodo's healthcare facilities, sanitation coverage increased from 0% to 33%. In Tioribougou, hygiene coverage in healthcare facilities has reached 100%, up from 33%. In our new partner district, Nonkon, we now have a baseline which will allow us to measure progress.

Despite financial and security challenges, we continued to support municipalities in implementing their WASH master plans. We also introduced an innovative communal monitoring system.

“In the past, the approach of WASH partners within our municipality was disparate. Some referred partially to our Social, Economic and Cultural Development Plan, while others arrived with their own agendas. With the development of our master plan, thanks to the support of IRC Mali, we were able to centralise and harmonise WASH development. From now on, each partner wishing to intervene is invited to align with this plan. The creation of a Municipal Water and Sanitation Service within our town hall marked a crucial step. The community is now better informed, knows where to get WASH information, seek assistance and express their needs.” Sidy Diarra, Deputy Mayor of Nossombougou.

We also influenced national level policy and practice. We helped to revise the National WASH Strategic Plan for healthcare facilities (2023-2027) and adapted WASH-FIT 2.0 to

Mali at a glance

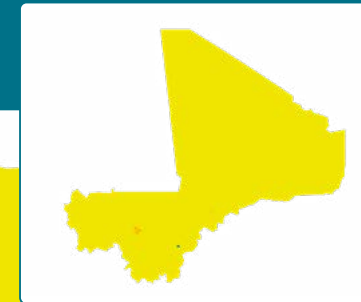
Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023



* Applies to all service level data.



■ Partner areas
■ Regional and local scaling areas

the Malian context, in collaboration with the WASH/PCI* task force and state technical services from health and water departments. The Ministry of Health's endorsement of this strategic plan marks a significant achievement in connecting sectors and transitioning from local to national scale.

Partner area: **N'Goutjina**

Population	30,247
Status masterplan	To be developed
# Schools	8
# Health posts	3

Scaling areas

Scaling area	Dandoli
Population	14,745
Status masterplan	To be developed
Scaling area	Nonkon
Population	27,451
Status masterplan	To be developed
Scaling area	Nossombougou
Population	32,096
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Ouolodo
Population	15,374
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Tioribougou
Population	19,602
Status masterplan	Completed



Issa Konaté, Technical Director of the Community Healthcare Centre of Nossombougou talking to a patient.

“Thanks to the awakening caused by IRC Mali, our view of rural maternity hospitals has been transformed. They have become the symbol of our renewed commitment to the well-being and health of our population.”

Chaka Coulibaly, Mayor of Nossombougou.

Niger: from a systems trip to systems change

In 2022, IRC Niger invited the mayor of Kornaka to take part in the All Systems Go Africa symposium in Ghana. During his stay, the mayor visited a site for collection, management and treatment of waste, which inspired him to set up a facility in his own commune.

This year, he put his idea into practice and mobilised funds to make it happen.

The Kornaka Tsabta ('clean') project launched with technical and financial support from the commune's partners, including IRC.

The long-term plan is to set up a community waste management structure and move to delegated sanitation management.

This work does not only mean improved livelihoods in terms of WASH access, it also means economic opportunities for people via direct and indirect job creation.

"As part of the project, the Town Council commissioned us to manufacture garbage cans and carts. This provided a significant source of funds, covering 70% of our expenses. It offered valuable practical experience and skills development, benefiting our young trainees. This increased hands-on experience will enhance our trainees' employability."
Issaka Soumaye, Director of the Kornaka Training Centre

Participation in the All Systems Connect International Symposium deepened the mayor's systems leadership, resulting in a municipal hygiene bylaw, new cross-country partnerships with local authorities in Benin, and an increased focus on solar-based water systems.

Niger at a glance

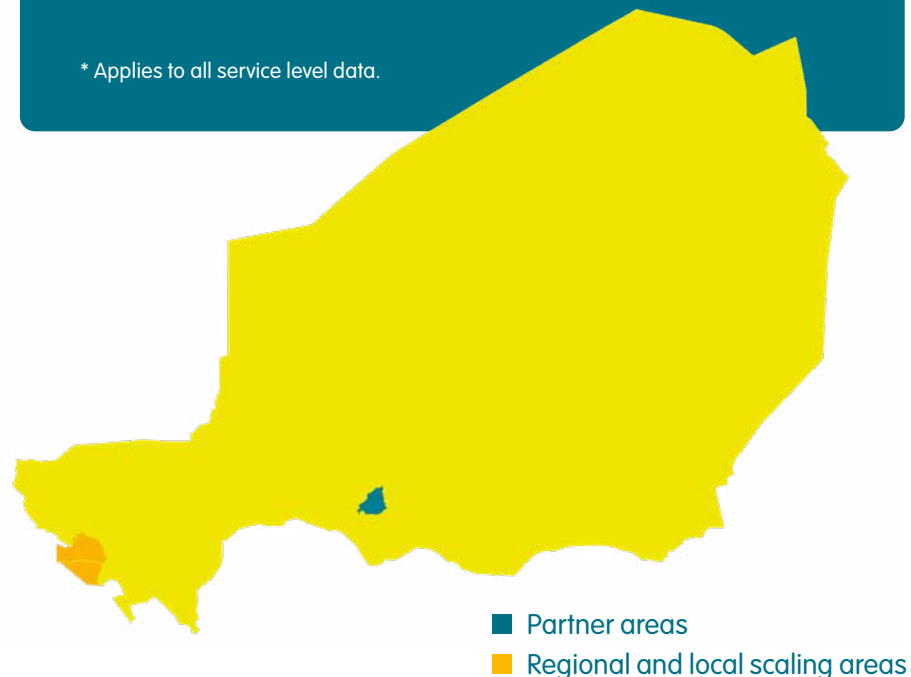
Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023



* Applies to all service level data.



We also provided technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Public Health. We helped draft a national roadmap and costed action plan for achieving SDG 6 in healthcare facilities, collaborating with WHO, World Vision, and WaterAid. Additionally, we successfully adapted the WASH FIT 2.0 tool to suit the context of Niger.

The coup d'état in Niger posed unexpected challenges. It made it harder for people to pay for necessities; economic activities and development halted as donors withdrew cooperation due to instability. However, stories of change, like the one championed by the mayor of Kornaka give hope for systems strengthening in a fragile context.

Scaling areas

Scaling area	Torodi
Population	166,555
Status masterplan	Completed
Scaling area	Makalondi
Population	111,610
Status masterplan	Completed

Partner area: Kornaka

Population	213,269
Status masterplan	Inception
Water	48%
Sanitation	7%
Hygiene	12%
# Schools	49
# Health posts	18

“Since the All Systems Go Africa symposium, I have set my commune on the path of strengthening the mechanisms that guarantee the delivery of better municipal water, hygiene and sanitation services to all the villages and tribes in the commune.”

Mr. Alassan Tsahirou, Mayor of Kornaka, Niger.



The waste management challenges in Kornaka that Mr. Alassan Tsahirou, Mayor of Kornaka is aiming to solve.

Uganda: taking master planning from local to national scale

We reached a milestone in 2023 when the National Planning Authority (NPA) agreed to integrate the district WASH master planning approach into its National Development Planning processes. This provides a great opportunity to scale up the approach we've been taking in Kabarole since 2018.

The Kabarole WASH master plan (2018-2030) has enabled us to gather leaders from all service sectors and levels of administration, for an annual accountability meeting, in partnership with the District Local Government (DLG) and IRC. The enthusiasm and attendance of this meeting was remarkable.

"...I am happy to note that the spirit of accountability which I have championed since 2012 is taking root." Hon Rwabuhinga Richard, Chairperson Kabarole DLG.

There is evidence of great progress – now captured in Kabarole (go.mwater.co/kabarole/mis) and Bunyangabu (go.mwater.co/bunyangabu/mis) which has prompted stakeholders to find ways to serve the remaining unserved villages and increase investment. For example, in 2023, a joint initiative was launched by the District Local Government to raise funds to supply an unserved parish (13 villages). The district mobilised € 60,000 and IRC, € 140,000.

Until now, the challenge has been securing an entry point to scale up WASH master planning so that it's embedded into the government planning process. We are therefore excited to work with the NPA to integrate this initiative into the national planning process where it will benefit the entire country.

Uganda at a glance

Percentage of country population with at least basic services (JMP)*



The context of our work in 2023



* Applies to all service level data.



■ Partner areas
■ Regional and local scaling areas

We also helped the Rural Water and Sanitation Regional Center 5 to implement the new Operations and Maintenance framework for rural water supply in Kabarole. This resulted in the District forming its first Water Board. This critical step will allow the District to contract an Area Service Provider who will provide professional management of the rural water supply services. Based on experiences elsewhere in the country, we expect this to lead to a sharp improvement in service quality.

Partner area: **Kabarole**

Population	235,400
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	41%
Sanitation	14%
# Schools	167
# Health posts	30

Partner area: **Bunyangabu**

Population	208,000
Status masterplan	Completed
Water	55%
Sanitation	38%
Hygiene	9%
# Schools	79
# Health posts	28



“I am amazed at how much the water and environment sector is doing that is not getting enough attention. People want to associate with and fund winning innovations [such as the WASH master planning] and I am excited that the NPA can now support the sector to set common priorities, avoid small and fragmented investments and pool resources to create more impact.”

Prof. Pamela Mbabazi, Executive Chairperson, NPA.



Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for all by 2030

Governance, staffing and finances

IRC'S SUPERVISORY BOARD

Wambui Gichuri (Chair) - Jan Sebel (Treasurer) - Akiça Bahri - Louis Boorstin - Clarissa Brocklehurst - Koos Wieriks

ORGANISATION AND STAFFING

On 31 December 2023, we had 100 staff members of which 68 were located in one of IRC's focus countries or regional programmes. In addition to its employees, IRC hosted four staff members for Sanitation and Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) and the Agenda For Change Secretariat. Our flexible workforce operated from 22 countries.

INCOME STATEMENT 2019 - 2023 (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS OF EUROS)

Income	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Programmatic funding DGIS	1,474	1,611	1,397	1,564	1,487
Other project funding	10,376	9,112	7,287	10,147	10,988
Total income	11,850	10,724	8,684	11,711	12,474
Expenses					
Personnel expenses	4,067	4,240	4,173	4,787	4,873
Direct project expenses	7,275	5,981	4,275	6,781	7,664
General admin expenses	455	215	488	207	283
Total expenses	11,797	10,435	8,937	11,776	12,820
Operating result	52	289	-252	-65	-345
Financial expenditures	-45	200	-241	-123	-118
Annual result	97	89	-12	58	-463

Our total income of €12.5 million for the year was our highest ever and is in line with our growth plans. It reflects our success in attracting donors and clients to support our work.

At the same time inflation, exchange rate fluctuations and shifting patterns of demand within the organisation meant that we recorded a loss of €463k.

A strategic restructuring towards the end of the year helped to reduce costs and lay the ground for a sustainable future as a decentralised network organisation.

GENDER

Of the 100 staff members, 46 identify as female and 54 as male. Looking at the gender balance in the levels of work, we can see that men have higher representation in the group of Support Facilitators (drivers, cleaners and guards) but the differences at Officer, Expert and Management levels are minimal.



■ Expenditure per programme (amounts in thousands of euros)
■ Number of staff per programme
■ Our flexible workforce - 124 people, of which 32 international, 68 in focus countries, 4 hosted, 1 intern and 20 associates - operated from 20 countries

DEVELOPING OUR ORGANISATION

Our transition to a networked federation continued in 2023 with the creation of a change team to oversee and guide the process. We extended our target date to January 2026, in recognition of an extremely busy year and to provide more time to prepare our teams and structures for the transition. Initial reactions from donors and partners confirms that this change is right for IRC, aligning us with broader movements of localisation and shifting power within international organisations.

We continued to monitor our carbon emissions and started to offset some of our international flights. In 2024 we will build on this by developing a broader environmental strategy. We also continued to implement the recommendations of the diversity, equity and inclusion survey that we carried out in 2022, building its recommendations into our policies and actions.

DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We believe that safe and secure water and sanitation services are a gateway to justice and opportunity for all people. This truth powers our mission.

We believe in diversity: in our teams and in the actors with whom we engage, as we work towards this mission.

We commit to actively reflect, learn, improve, promote and invest in a culture that supports diversity, justice, equity and inclusion.

We are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we will strongly advocate and promote the realisation of human rights in all that we do.

We will not engage in or tolerate any breach of human rights by our staff or associates.

PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)

IRC actively addresses PSEA. Initiatives include staff obtaining UNICEF PSEA certificates, having designated Trust Persons that people can turn to, an established working group, improved policies, and bilingual accessibility of relevant information. We're aiming to comply with global standards, including mediation support.

SUPPORTING OUR WORK

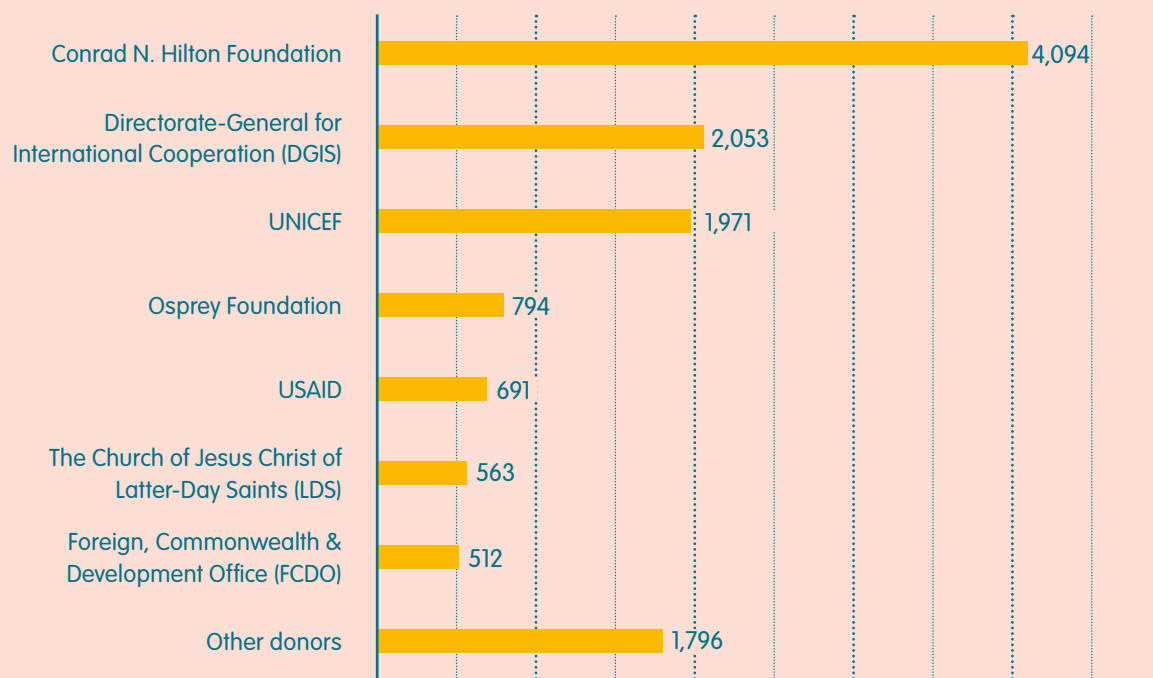
By working together through collective action, we can drive systems change and build resilient local and national WASH systems to achieve universal access for all by 2030. We are grateful to our partners and funders for helping us to get closer to our vision once again this year.

“We are very excited about embarking on a collaborative journey with IRC, NGO partners and six governments in Africa and Asia. Together, we are working to strengthen the systems that will deliver resilient and equitable WASH services. We started by mobilising high level government engagement at the All Systems Connect International Symposium. IRC's expertise and networks then helped identify entry points for Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), in low- and middle-income countries where we'll tackle complex and interwoven systems challenges. An ambitious monitoring and learning agenda, developed by IRC and its consortium partners, the University of Leeds and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, will help capture learning and good practice. This includes new work on hygiene systems and ensuring that WASH systems are inclusive, including for people with disabilities, women and girls.”

Lisa Rudge, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Adviser,
Global Health Directorate, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development
Office, UK government.



OUR DONORS (AMOUNTS IN THOUSANDS OF EUROS)



PROJECT IN FOCUS

2023 marks the last full operational year of IRC's work with the [WASH SDG Programme](#), a five year, multi partner WASH project funded by DGIS, spanning seven countries across Africa and Asia: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Nepal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. With a total budget of over € 600k, IRC has been active in all subprogrammes. A highlight was undertaking the endline sustainability checks across the whole programme - 14 in total. These have been critical in mapping progress and challenges to ensuring long term sustainability. They've energised the discussion between government partners and programme staff about long term support to services across schools, healthcare centres and in communities. In Ethiopia, Uganda and Bangladesh, we supported local government partners in master planning and lifecycle costing, advocacy and media work. We also engaged in knowledge management and provided support to learning platforms.

"Success is best when shared. I witnessed this following the sanitation and hygiene fund project that was launched this year. The project is targeting selected healthcare facilities (HCFs), schools and surrounding local communities in seven districts of Uganda. Through collective efforts, IRC has been able to scale out to six more districts, which presents an opportunity for impact at scale using market-based approaches. This fascinating synergy has improved coordination between district departments (Health and Education) and instilled a spirit of teamwork in increasing access to quality, affordable, sustainable and safely managed sanitation and hygiene services"

Ayoreka Mary Concepta, IRC Uganda Regional WASH Officer.

We thank the following donors and clients - including those who support our consultancy work - for joining and supporting us in our WASH journey:

100fontaines / 2ie Institut International d'Ingénierie de l'Eau et de l'Environnement / Agence Française de Développement (AFD) / Aguaconsult Ltd / Amref Flying Doctors / Anesvad Foundation / Asian Development Bank (ADB) / Aqua for All / Aquaya Institute / Advocating Rights in South Asia (Arisa) / Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation / BRAC / CAF Development Bank of Latin America / Conrad N. Hilton Foundation / Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) / Dutch Research Council (NWO-WOTRO) / Endeavour Foundation / End Water Poverty / European Union - European Commission / Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) / Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) / ForthInvestment / Gemeente Den Haag / German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) / Helvetas Swiss Intercorporation / Hivos / Innovative Change Collaborative Services Private Limited (ICCSPL) / Institute for Water Education Delft (IHE) / Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) / James Percy Foundation / Millennium Water Alliance (MWA) / Netcentric Campaigns / Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) / Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP) / Niras Indvelop / Nuffic / Office National de l'Eau et l'assainissement (ONEA) / OneDrop Foundation / Osprey Foundation / Population Services International (PSI) / Project Maji / Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) / Semafo / Simavi / Swiss Water & Sanitation Consortium (SWSC) / The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints / Technical University Delft / United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) / United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) / United States Agency for International Development (USAID) / Uytewaal Consultancies / Vitens Evides International (VEI) / VOx Impuls Foundation / Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) / WaterAid / Water For Good / Water For People / Water Integrity Network (WIN) / Waterloo Foundation / Welthungerhilfe / World Health Organization (WHO) / World Vision

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to make access to safe water and sanitation available for everyone, for good. The UN has set a target to achieve this by 2030 – known as Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6).

Resilient systems: the only way

We know that the only way to achieve this goal is through resilient and sustainable local and national water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems that transform lives. We know how to build and strengthen these systems – but we need to do it now.

It will take everyone, in all parts of the system, changing the way they think and work.

Everyone, together

Each part of a country's WASH system must work effectively: from people using pumps, to monitoring tools, to finance systems. This can only be achieved if everyone in the system knows and plays their part.

Achieving universal access calls for collective action by a broad movement of government, civil society, private sector service providers, financiers, academia and others.

Our unique position

As a change hub, we're in a unique position to unite people to drive and champion change from the ground up.

We need to convince district, country and global decision makers of what it'll take to achieve SDG 6.

Now is the time

We need to act now. We're halfway through but not halfway there. We need everyone to commit to massive-scale change – and as you're reading this, that also means you.



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